

Committee on Children Public Testimony

S.B. #841 – AAC the Implementation of a Comprehensive Children's Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Health Plan

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I am a married parent with three children. All are adopted. All are diagnosed with complex trauma and/or adoption/ attachment disruption-rooted conditions. My 10-year old daughter suffers from several conditions that present in a variety of troubling, unstable ways. Her symptoms cycle seasonally and are triggered by many unpredictable environmental, social, emotional and psychological factors that can render her unsafe to herself and others; and she is medicated to help maintain her behaviors.

In my experience with the Department of Children and Families – pursuing voluntary services and appropriate, condition informed, clinician recommended models of care and support strategies; my family and my daughter were threatened, humiliated, lied to, denied access to care and then, accused of parental wrong doing, viewed through a 'protective' lens, and processed in that image. This, instead of receiving respectful, responsive, compassionate access to care and services as requested. (2011: Initial denial was said to be rooted in deep funding cuts.)

Based on this experience, it is my opinion that the DCF Commissioner lacks a full, empathetic and therapeutic understanding of the scope and needs of psychologically impaired, emotionally troubled and disturbed children. She is ill equipped to comprehend the struggles their families face on a daily basis and the difficulties that plague non-DCF families in navigating the current systems of care as they stand. I also fear her appointments will include many who are beholden to the Department through funding, contract relationships, politics, and alike.

In contract, the Commissioner of the DMHAS, the Commissioner of the DDS and the Commissioner of DSS are all far more informed, familiar and prepared in the fundamental areas.

Further, their contacts work more closely with those suffering from the array of conditions targeted and understand the scope of the delivery system crisis PA 13-178 was drafted to address and fix.

In keeping with PA 13-178, which couples these departments for the purpose of designing and implementing a new system of care delivery for children, so too should these agency heads be involved and share equally in the authority and appointment of, the Implementation Advisory Board.

Therefore, pursuant to Sec. 1, Item C of this bill – The appointment of board members, as outlined in Sec. 1, Item b, subdivisions 1-9, I do not support the sole authority and responsibility of these appointments to be designated to the Commissioner of Children and Families.